

A close-up photograph of a bright green katydid (Orthoptera) resting on a large, green leaf. The katydid is positioned centrally, facing the viewer. Its long, slender body and prominent hind legs are clearly visible. The leaf has a distinct vein pattern and a slightly serrated edge. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting a natural outdoor setting.

The Naturalist's Notebook

03/15/2021

Calkins Nature Area



Trail Journaling



Mussel Remnants



Mosses and Lichens



New Trail Mantis Art

Trail Conditions:

Fair

Trails are snow covered after yesterday's storm, some portions are melted at this time. Conditions are good for hiking, though the trails are damp in some places due to the ground still being frozen deep in the timber. Get out and enjoy a comfortable walk along the trails!

Things To Do:

Book a Private Museum Tour, See Our New Trail Art, Start a Nature Journal

1. Want to bring the family out to the Calkins Nature Area museum? Give us a call for your own family tour! 641-648-9878.
2. Many generous donors have given us metal trail art over the past two years. Deer, bison, elk, butterflies, praying mantis, frogs, and dragonflies can be seen on the trails. Can you find all the art? You'll have to look hard.
3. Cozy up next to a dry tree and write down everything you see on the Calkins trails. Animals, animal behaviors, new plants, weather conditions, and more can go in your journals

Wildlife Sightings

Rankings are based on seasonal commonality

Common— black capped chickadee, white breasted nuthatch, house sparrow, house finch, dark eyed junco, northern cardinal, downy woodpecker, blue jay, red bellied woodpecker, eastern fox squirrel, eastern cottontail rabbit

Somewhat Common— red winged blackbird, cedar waxwing, common grackle, bald eagle, raccoon, opossum, groundhog, american robin

Unusual— None this week

Rare— tundra swans, trumpeter swans, snow gees, greater white fronted geese, pileated woodpecker, north american river otter

Tundra Swan or Trumpeter Swan?



Tundra Swan



Trumpeter Swan

Tundra swans and trumpeter swans have been spotted just outside the nature center's grounds this week. While both are often visible in the spring time, the tundra swan is far more common in the state of Iowa.

Trumpeters have made a strong push the past few years thanks to reintroduction efforts by Iowa's

Department of Natural Resources. The two species can be difficult to distinguish in flight to the untrained eye because of their relatively similar size and whitish colored plumage. As a rule of thumb, there are three ways we can distinguish tundra swans from trumpeter swans:

- 1. Tundra swans have a yellow marking beneath their eye on their bill. Trumpeter swans have an all black bill with pink "lipstick" at the corners of their mouth.*
- 2. Tundra swans and trumpeter swans have different vocalizations. Tundra swans make more of a bugling vocalization while trumpeter swans, quite literally, sound like a trumpet when communicating with one another.*
- 3. Tundra swans are much smaller than trumpeter swans. The size difference takes a trained eye to distinguish from far distances, but the two species do differ in their stature.*

Trumpeter swans are no longer common in Iowa because of habitat destruction, particularly the degradation of their wetland breeding grounds in the southern half of Iowa (which falls in their native breeding range). There are only 3 remaining nesting pairs south of Interstate 80. Reintroduction efforts have raised the number of nesting attempts in recent years, with data from the DNR suggesting 54 attempted nestings of trumpeter swans took place in 2019.

Upcoming Programs:

Lunch and Learn Programs

12 pm to 12:30 pm on March 20th and 27th

At Estes Park in Iowa Falls

Join us at Estes Park in Downtown Iowa Falls on Saturday March 20th and Saturday March 27th from 12 pm to 12:30 pm for Socially Distanced Lunch and Learns! Bring your lunch to the park, take a seat, and learn about some unique wildlife with Calkins' Nature Area staff members. The first weekend we will be discussing the unique characteristics of otters, the habitats they call home, and why they are an important species for our aquatic ecosystems.

Weekend two will be all about foxes and coyotes. Foxes and coyotes are most active throughout the spring because it is their breeding season. Learn about the behavior of our wild canines, some of the key features that make foxes and coyotes different, and how we utilize predator hunting and trapping to control the booming populations of these sly carnivores.

General Things to Remember:

- Reptile room and nature center facilities remain closed.
- Outdoor facilities are available sunrise to sunset, 7 days a week now that we have hit the spring season.
- Seeing normally nocturnal animals out during the day is COMMON this time of year. Racoons and opossums are emerging from their winter sleep and actively search for food during the warmest hours of the day.
- The snow has uncovered some dead deer on our trails from this winter, please stay away from those as best as possible.